

Holy snake handling, Batman!

Mainstage play looks at religion as accepting, loving outsiders

By MEGAN CRAMER
OLD GOLD AND BLACK REVIEWER

The last time you went to church, what did you experience? Songs, prayer, and snakes? Well, that's what you can experience this weekend, along with explosive fights, scandalous characters, and reptilian fun.

Holy Ghosts, a play by Romulus Linney, will be performed Friday, Saturday and Nov. 13-16 at 8 p.m., and on Nov. 17 at 2 p.m. at the Mainstage Theatre in the Scales Fine Arts Center. Linney, will be present the opening weekend of the show to give a special post-play lecture Friday and Saturday.

Holy Ghosts tells the story of a young woman named Nancy (played by senior Tiffany Bursleson), who, in the process of running away from her abusive husband, finds refuge in a snake-handling Pentecostal Holiness congregation deep in the Appalachian mountains.

The congregation is a motley crew of outcasts who all have found a home and their only community in this religion. "There is a fascinating range of characters. It's a collection of wounded human beings who are able to open their hearts and take care of each other," said Sharon Andrews, the play's director and an adjunct instructor of theater.

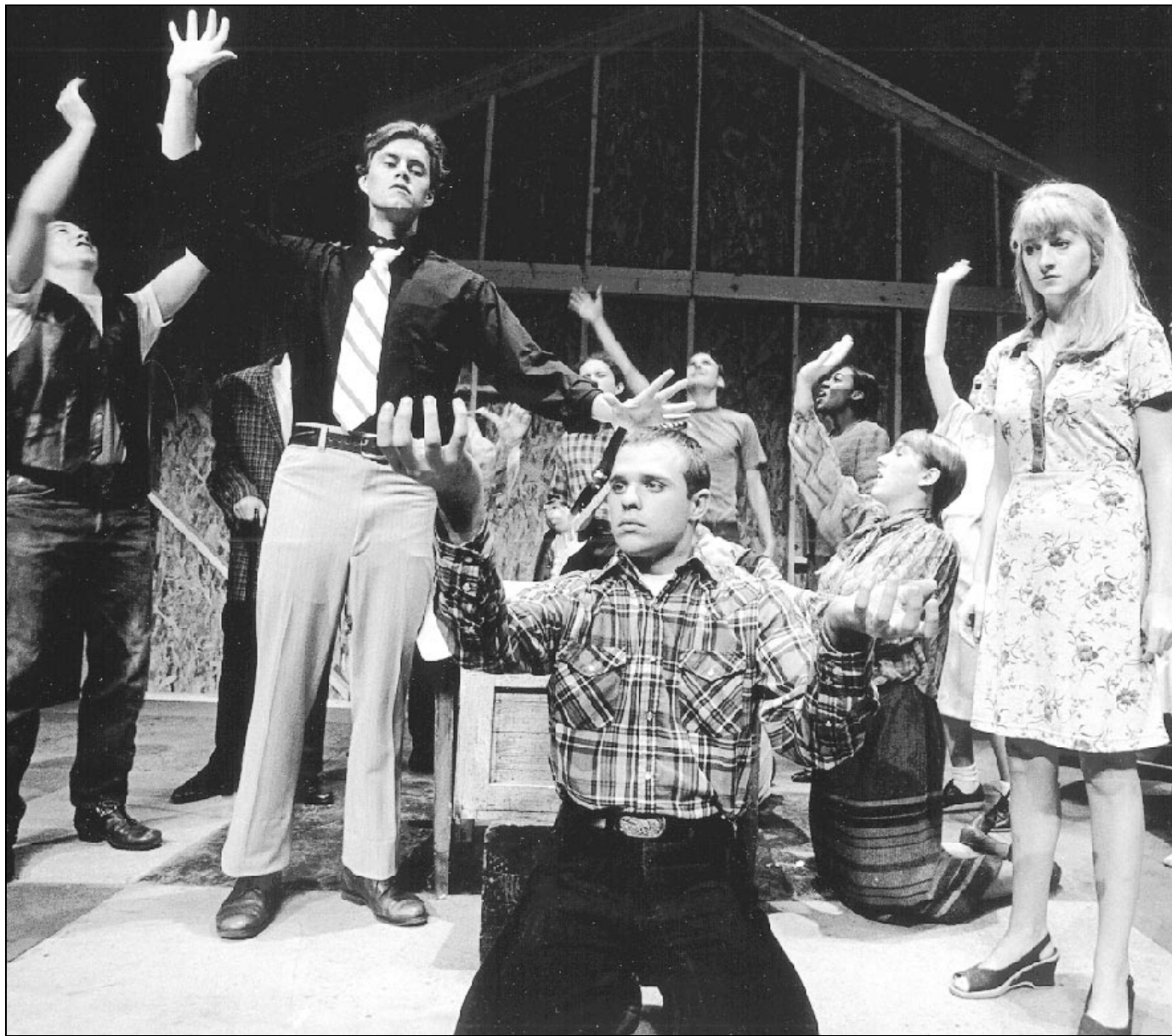
The church's leader is the Rev. Obediah Buckhorn (graduate student F. Trent Merchant). He is charismatic, strong, and unifies the people, leading them to God from their pain.

Among the members of his congregation are Carl Specter (junior Kenneth Thompson), a man who talks to the ghost of his dead hunting dog; Mrs. Wall (sophomore Melissa Johnson), a former Sunday school teacher who renewed her faith in the snake handling religion; Billy and Muriel Boggs, a 15-year-old couple with a new baby; a nymphomaniac (senior Heather Cowan) who has found a haven in this church; "Cancer Man" (junior Jeff Schoenheit); Lorena Cosburg (sophomore Lindy Krzyzewski), a housewife who gets walked on in all other areas of life, but feels empowered when at the church; and many others.

They all have a story to tell, and even though they're all exiled from other parts of society, they all find a home with the snake handlers.

Bursleson said that even though some of the characters are extreme, "everyone's done a really good job of taking it seriously and not making caricatures of their characters. Linney isn't making fun of these people; he's just illustrating a different way of life."

The theme of religion is central to the play. "It takes an intimate and powerful look at just how far a deep and abiding



The cast members of *Holy Ghosts* demonstrate a Pentecostal Holiness church snake-handling session. Courtesy of university theatre

faith can take a group of people," Andrews said.

The whole play takes place during a worship service of the church and although the snakes are mimed, there is even a snake handling scene. "There is a lot of love, a lot of anger, a lot of fighting, a lot of singing," Andrews said.

But another central theme of the play is the acceptance of people who have not been accepted anywhere else. "I think it's interesting that (Linney) chooses to use Pentecostal Holiness. They are seen as the black sheep of churches. And all of the people in these churches are seen as black sheep," said senior Craig Joseph, who plays lawyer Rogers Canfield. "I think it is initially about what the church can do to reach out

to these people," he said.

"People need to look at the play as making a statement that the attitudes of churches need to be accepting, loving."

The cast had the rare and interesting experience of working with the playwright over fall break. Linney shared with the cast his own experiences that inspired the writing of the play.

"It added a whole new dimension of reality," Schoenheit said. "On one level, he acted as a director and told us what certain lines meant and the reasons behind them, and on the other he really brought the power and feeling of a culture and heritage that the play arose from."

Linney's post-show lecture will allow the audience to share these experiences,

too. The play has a lot of aspects that are relevant to a college audience. It deals with many familiar issues that are just placed in an unfamiliar setting.

"It gives a pretty accurate portrait of a group of people that we probably don't have much experience with being sheltered on a college campus," Joseph said. "It deals with individuality and belonging within a community especially with students who are trying to find a place."

But beyond all of the deep character studies and religious aspects, there is a lot of humor. "It's funny!" Andrews said.

Holy Ghosts

■ 8 p.m. Fri., Sat. and Nov. 13-16; 3 p.m. Nov. 17.
■ Mainstage Theatre, Scales Fine Arts Center

Fonda acts with aplomb in Klute

By EDDIE CHILDRESS
OLD GOLD AND BLACK REVIEWER

For a good time in the big city, check out *Escape From New York* or any Woody Allen film. For a look at a not-so-good time, try *Klute*, a 1971 suspense-thriller about one woman's struggle to leave her past behind.

John Klute (Donald Sutherland) is a small-town detective looking for his best friend, who has been missing for six months.

The only clue is a letter addressed to Bree Daniels (Jane Fonda), a call girl in New York, found in his desk.

No one had ever heard of her before. When Klute gets to the city, he finds out about the calls she's been getting with seemingly no one on the other end and past "dates" she's barely lived through. These could lead him to the truth — if he can keep her alive.

Believe it or not, Jane Fonda is a two-time Oscar-winning actress. Watching *Klute*, I could see why. The title belongs to Sutherland, but the movie is hers.

Her portrayal of a woman who sings church

Believe it or not, Jane Fonda is a two-time Oscar-winning actress.

hymns while getting high, a woman who wants a career change out of prostitution but is addicted to the power, is as complex and nuanced as any performance I've ever seen, past or present, male or female.

The hooker with a heart of gold may be a stereotype, but Fonda does it better than Elizabeth Shue (*Leaving Las Vegas*) or Julia Roberts (*Pretty Woman*) could ever hope for.

Other performances are worthy of note, however. Sutherland, one of the most under-appreciated actors I know of, turns in an excellent performance as a man seeking the truth regardless of his best friend's role in it. His quiet, unassuming characterization is exactly right for this role. I don't want to give away the ending, but Charles Cioffi's portrayal of the psycho is also right on target: a man who's rather unstable but is convinced that he's being perfectly reasonable in killing whoever poses a threat.

Well photographed and directed by Alan J. Pakula (his sophomore outing, his other films include *Presumed Innocent* and *The Pelican Brief*), the major weakness I found (if it can be considered as such) is the attention to one character at the expense of plot. A suspense-driven drama of this type deserves more to move it forward. But if character studies are more your speed, you'd do well to give *Klute* a look. One woman's performance can carry a film for an audience in the right mood.

EYE ON THE ARTS

■ Solstice concert canceled

The Student Union-sponsored Winter Solstice Concert featuring three Windham Hill recording artists has been canceled. The concert, scheduled for today, was to have featured pianist Philip Aaberg, the Turtle Island String Quartet and duo Tuck & Patti.

If you bought tickets for the concert, you may obtain a refund by returning them to the Ticketmaster outlet from which they were purchased. If you bought tickets over the phone, call Ticketmaster at 722-6400.

For additional information, call SU at Ext. 4869.

■ Recital to explore Foster's works

Junior Andrew Clark will present a lecture-recital at 4:30 p.m. Saturday titled "An Afternoon with Stephen Foster." The event will take place at Reynolda House.

Clark, who researched Foster this summer at the University of Pittsburgh, said he wants the audience to rediscover Foster through his music and clear up myths about the popular 19th-century American musician.

Admission is free for university students and \$4 for adults.

■ Faculty exhibit opens

An exhibit featuring the works of faculty members opens Friday in the gallery at the Scales Fine Arts Center. The exhibit, which runs through Jan. 29, features paintings, drawings, prints, sculpture, mixed media and film completed by faculty members in the last 10 years.

An opening reception will be held from 7-9 p.m., and a film projection will begin at 8:30 p.m. in Scales 102.

Admission to the reception and the exhibit is free. For information, call Ext. 5585.

Students show talent at showcase recital

By ROBERT SHAW
OLD GOLD AND BLACK REVIEWER

The cream of the crop was on display in the Student Showcase Recital Oct. 27 in Brendle Recital Hall at the Scales Fine Arts Center.

The student performers were selected by the music department faculty from among the outstanding performances of the previous academic year. These sophomores, juniors and seniors brought to a substantial audience their artistic talent and personal expression.

The honors recital was the inaugural one for the Year of the Arts Student Artists Series, a student-initiated program, which will highlight students in the music department.

Sophomore Kerry Grow was the first student performer to take the stage. Playing Beethoven's "Sonata No. 26," she showed why she is one of the rising stars of the university's music program.

Grow was the winner of the open competition in the Giles-Harris Student Competition in February. Her performance displayed both sensitivity and enthusiasm for the music.

Senior Nikki Blackmer, a soprano, continued the program with "Deh vieni, non tardar" and "Parto, parto," by Mozart. Her effervescent and natural style was a great example of what a singer should strive for in performance.

Blackmer plans a senior recital and chamber music honors project later this year.

Senior flutist Kim McClintic, a music minor, changed the pace with her interest in

music of this century.

In Robert Dick's "Lookout," she used some avant-garde techniques, including humming while playing and playing the melody with percussive keystrokes.

This interesting piece has been a department favorite over the past year. McClintic will present a senior recital in the spring semester.

Senior Seth Brodsky performed twice during the recital — once as a soloist and later with senior soprano Jennifer Boone.

As a solo guitarist, Brodsky performed "Capricho árabe" by Francisco Tárrega and "Asturias" by Isaac Albeniz. This sensitive musician accomplished some impressive finger acrobatics in "Capricho," then drew his listeners in with an exquisite performance of "Asturias."

Few classical guitarists can lay claim to the souls of listeners like Brodsky; like the other seniors, he will present a senior recital later in the year.

Three John Dowland lute songs rounded out the showcase.

Boone joined Brodsky in a rousing performance of these medieval melodies.

Boone and Brodsky have become a known duo in past years for their excellent performances of music in this genre; their collaboration has proven to be one of the most inspiring to have graced Brendle over the past year.

It was evident at the recital that well-rounded, liberal arts scholars, not just conservatory students, have the capacity to emote the sublime and social expression of the musical art. The musical integrity on display showed what incredible talent resides at the university.



Tripp Harrington

Conducting electricity

Brian Gorelick, the director of choral ensembles, leads the university orchestra in costume at its annual midnight concert on Halloween.